



THE COUNCIL OF
INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

REPORT OF A SYMPOSIUM ON THE LIBERAL ARTS AND BUSINESS

Edited by Thomas F. Flynn



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The Council of Independent Colleges is an association of more than 540 independent liberal arts, comprehensive, and international colleges and universities, and higher education affiliates and organizations that work together to strengthen college and university leadership, sustain high-quality education, and enhance private higher education's contributions to society. To fulfill this mission, CIC provides services to campus leaders as well as seminars, workshops, and programs that assist institutions in improving educational programs and address aspects of leadership, financial management and performance, and institutional visibility.

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We are grateful also to Elmhurst College (IL) for hosting the Symposium on its campus. Elmhurst proved to be an ideal location, and President Bryant Cureton and his colleagues were gracious and efficient hosts.

Thanks should also be given to Harry Davis, the Roger L. and Rachael M. Goetz Distinguished Service Professor of Creative Management at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, who ably led the Symposium; and to Thomas Flynn, CIC’s senior advisor, who also organized the Symposium, guided our planning efforts, and has prepared this report. Dr. Flynn previously served as an English professor, dean, and president at several private colleges and universities.

Finally, we owe special thanks to the business leaders who contributed their experience and perspectives to the Symposium. Many of these men and women are graduates of liberal arts colleges. Some majored in a field of the liberal arts at another type of university or college. Most remain actively engaged in supporting liberal arts colleges — their alma maters and others — as trustees and benefactors. Their involvement was essential to the success of the Symposium, in continuing a discussion of the relationship between business and the liberal arts and suggesting future steps to demonstrate the benefits of the liberal arts in the corporate sector.

This report highlights key issues discussed during the Symposium and includes a series of reflections on the connections between liberal arts and business.

Richard Ekman
President
Council of Independent Colleges
Washington, DC

**Symposium on the Liberal Arts and Business
Elmhurst College
November 20, 2003**

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS

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Richard J. Cook (Allegheny College, PA)
Bryant L. Cureton (Elmhurst College, IL) –
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Andrew T. Ford (Wabash College, IN)
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AGENDA

10:00 A.M.

SESSION I — OPENING QUESTIONS

Personal Perspective (CEOs): If you became the president of a liberal arts college, what in your past experience would help you emphasize the strong connections between leadership, especially in business, and liberal arts education?

Personal Perspective (Presidents): If you became a business CEO, what in your past experience would help you explain the strong connections between liberal arts education and leadership, especially in business?

Shared Perspective: How have world events (and your evolving professional experience) changed your understanding of the value of liberal arts education?

11:15 A.M.

SESSION II — BARRIERS TO APPRECIATION OF LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION (Small Groups)

Discussion Question: What (and where) are the chief barriers that prevent people from understanding the benefits of liberal arts education to future leaders, including those in business?

1:00 P.M.

SESSION III — GROUP REPORTS AND PLENARY DISCUSSION

Discussion Question: Why have business and educational leaders not been more successful in addressing these barriers? Why are we where we are?

2:15 P.M.

SESSION IV — RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Discussion Question: What specific steps could business and educational leaders take to work together more effectively to prepare tomorrow's leaders, especially in business?

Discussion Question: What specific steps could business and educational leaders take together to advocate more effectively for the value of liberal arts education?

3:30 P.M.

SESSION V — NEXT STEPS

4:00 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT

Purpose and Context of the Symposium

American colleges and universities have long argued that a liberal arts education provides the best preparation for life. Colleges often assert that the disciplines of the liberal arts provide a cultural orientation to the world in which we live and that they equip students with transferable ideas, analytical and communication skills, and global perspectives, as well as the ability to synthesize knowledge and make informed value judgments. The argument is that, no matter what their chosen career, this grounding will serve students well and, in the aggregate, benefit society.

Business leaders have been equally vocal about the importance of a liberal arts education as preparation for career advancement and for the exercise of leadership in the corporate community. They cite the need for high-level managerial employees who readily learn on the job many of their specific responsibilities, after having been more broadly prepared by their liberal arts background.

At the same time, contrasting perspectives and recent developments have clouded this idealized view of the relationship between business and the liberal arts. On campus, for example, faculty members in the liberal arts often do not promote business careers to their students and even disparage the corporate sector. In the business community, corporations that once hired liberal arts majors now prefer their new employees to be recent college majors in professional and technical fields — accounting and engineering, for example — because there is less time and money available for specialized training within the corporation. Some executives and mid-level managers have complained that new white-collar employees from all backgrounds arrive with insufficient competence in communication and analytical skills and lack necessary organizational abilities. They also express doubt

that colleges and universities are, in fact, preparing individuals for lives of civic responsibility and societal leadership. And the recent wave of corporate scandals has made clear to all that many otherwise well-educated and successful individuals lack the ethical perspective necessary to keep their moral compasses pointed in the right direction.

A similar, perhaps wider, gap exists between the claims made by proponents of liberal arts education, on the one hand, and the attitudes of prospective college students and the general public, on the other. Research by George Dehne Associates (2003) reveals, for example, that fewer than half of college-bound students judged as “very accurate” the statement that a liberal arts education “teaches students how to think” and barely one-third considered as “very accurate” the notion that such education demonstrated “how different fields of knowledge relate.” Perhaps most disturbingly, fewer than one-third rated as “very accurate” the claim that liberal arts education prepares students for graduate study, and only two in five students judged as “very accurate”



Paul Young, executive vice president of NOVA Research, MD, (left), **Richard Cook**, president of Allegheny College (PA) (middle), and **Michael Lomax**, president of Dillard University (LA), discuss the connections between the liberal arts and business during the CIC symposium at Elmhurst College (IL) on November 20, 2003.

the idea that such background “prepare[d] you for a changing world.”

Widely disparate conceptions of a liberal arts education further complicate matters. Some define liberal arts education solely as intensive study in the traditional disciplines within the humanities and the social and natural sciences; others equate it with the broad exposure to knowledge gained through general education distribution requirements, commonplace across all institutional types; still others conceive of a liberal arts education more in terms of skills, capacities, and different modes of thought. Many assume that a liberal arts education, whatever the subjects under study, cultivates an individual’s values and shapes character.

Over the last 25 years, major curriculum reform movements have emphasized the importance of cultural study, diverse traditions, and the integration of knowledge. As articulated in reports such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ *Contemporary Understandings of Liberal Education* (1998) and *Greater Expectations* (2002), these goals are addressed in both general education and the major — including in management, nursing, and other professional fields — and in experiential learning opportunities beyond the campus. Liberal education, in this view, is less rooted in specific disciplines than in certain practices of teaching and learning and through the practice of democratic citizenship in a global environment.

With these competing, if compatible, conceptions of liberal arts education, small wonder that business

leaders and the general public are unsure of its intrinsic value and practical benefits. The situation poses a special challenge for all the nation’s small colleges, including national liberal arts colleges and comprehensive, regional colleges that often place more emphasis on professional majors. One trend over the past few decades is the increasing preference of students to attend larger institutions with a broader array of educational and social opportunities. In contrast, most liberal arts colleges appeal to the advantages of small classes, personalized instruction, and a close-knit campus community. While popularly associated with a liberal arts education, these attributes are not perceived by most high school seniors as necessarily providing a higher quality education than is available at larger schools, often at lower cost. Beyond the decision of whether to offer professional programs and other programs presumed to be attractive to students, liberal arts colleges face the challenge of defining the nature and benefits of a liberal arts education and determining effective ways to “make the case” to potential students, to the business community, and to the wider public.

Against this backdrop, the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), with support from the James S. Kemper Foundation, sponsored a national symposium in November 2003 at Elmhurst College (IL) to address the connections between liberal arts education and professional leadership, particularly in business. This was hardly the first such conference on this subject. Two in particular held in the last two decades — one organized jointly by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Association of American Colleges and another sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation — approached the topic, with emphasis on the humanities. Conferences are also organized periodically to focus on the challenges and opportunities facing liberal arts colleges, such as the one sponsored in November 2003 by the American Council of Learned Societies at Williams College.

The CIC gathering was unusual in that it brought together equal numbers of college and university presidents and corporate leaders for an intensive, day-long symposium. The presidents represented a wide variety of small colleges; the business executives represented an array of industries such as financial services,



Northland College (WI) President **Karen Halbersleben** said that to make a more effective case for liberal arts education, presidents should talk more often with board members and CEOs of local corporations about the importance of the relationship between the liberal arts and business.

manufacturing, home furnishings, medical products, and technology. Most of the executives were themselves liberal arts graduates from a wide range of colleges and universities. (A list of participants is on page 3.)

Some attention was naturally directed toward potentially fruitful partnerships between academe and business, but the discussion focused most extensively on identifying the specific benefits of a liberal arts education to professional leadership, especially in business, and on understanding the barriers preventing clearer articulation of these benefits to students, employers, and the wider public. The following pages highlight some of the key ideas emanating from the discussion.

Working Definition of a Liberal Arts Education

Organized around a series of questions, the Symposium was structured to draw on the participants' diverse leadership experience and to encourage their reflections on the influence of their liberal arts



If we have in more recent centuries allowed the tradition of liberal learning to be viewed as the opposite of preparing for a career, it is because we have lost our grasp of what the concept meant to the builders of the tradition. Much the same case can be made that the best of professional preparation has always emphasized broadening experiences that reach beyond just the special practical skills of a job.... Liberal education and preparation for life's work desperately need each other. For just as liberal learning reminds us of the Socratic principle that "the unexamined life is not worth living," so experience teaches the complementary truth that the unlived life is not worth examining.

—Bryant Cureton, Elmhurst College

education on their careers. To avoid lengthy debate over the ideal components of liberal arts education and to establish a common frame of reference, participants used the following "working definition":

A liberal arts education —

- involves focused study in the liberal arts disciplines (humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences), through the major and/or through general education requirements;
- emphasizes different ways of thinking and the development of skills of analysis and written and oral communication — that is, "habits of the mind";
- cultivates development of an individual's values and attitudes — that is, "habits of the heart";
- includes study of and reflection on the ideas, societies, and cultures of human history; and
- enables an individual to make connections among subject matters, modes of thinking, and theory and application.

Connections Between Liberal Arts Education and Effective Leadership

The group initially addressed two topics that challenged participants to think differently about the benefits of the liberal arts. Business executives and presidents took turns articulating:

First, the transferability of their experience as leaders between business and academe, with emphasis on the influence of their liberal arts backgrounds; and

Second, the impact of world events and globalization during their careers on their understanding and appreciation of their undergraduate educations.

Striking parallels were quickly evident between the experiences of CEOs and presidents. In addition to the widely recognized role of the liberal arts in strengthening communication and analytical skills, participants noted several important connections between liberal arts education and effective leadership.

Participants cited historical and literary study as especially important for understanding the diversity of human experience and for gaining critical perspective on one's values and attitudes. Literary study, noted Michael Lomax, requires the reader "to move beyond the self and explore seriously the values and experience of 'the other.'" Deep understanding of human nature and human motives is, for Jonathan DeFelice, an important element of the humanities and a precondition for subsequent professional leadership — specifically, success in building productive relationships and developing effective teams. William Frame and Peter Browning emphasized that without the self-awareness — or "emotional intelligence" (as defined by author Daniel Goleman) — cultivated by the liberal arts, leaders could not effectively understand colleagues or competitors, while Karen Halbersleben and Todd Hutton observed that leaders could not maximize the potential of colleagues without sensitivity to differences in values and learning styles.

For Arthur Rasmussen and Murray Dashe, creativity and the "ability to think outside the box" are essential executive capacities nurtured by liberal arts education. Facility with complexity and ambiguity and the ability to question issues from multiple points of view are critical products of such study for William Travis and Michael MacDowell. Bryant Cureton concurred, citing the interplay among disci-

plines and ways of thinking as a tangible benefit of a liberal arts education.

Cultural understanding is a key benefit of the liberal arts for Marvin Suomi, especially the experience of "projecting one's self into a culture different from one's own." Not only is this immersion necessary for cross-cultural understanding, but it provides "enhanced awareness of one's own American culture and values." Others readily agreed that globalization and technological change are the obvious social trends that had changed (and deepened) their appreciation for the liberal arts. "Flexible adaptation" and "breadth of perspective" are, according to Jeff Payne, two liberal arts competencies needed to respond to the rapid pace of change. Sensitivity to significant differences in cultures, including variations of religion as well as nationality, have assumed increased importance, noted Hutton and Marlin Miller, while at the same time, emphasized Paul Young, globalization demands that leaders seek to discover and apply solutions that cross cultural boundaries. Heightened attention to contemporary cultures needs to be balanced by historical understanding, cautioned Frame, while Halbersleben noted that such perspective is essential to thinking responsibly about a sustainable future.

The significance of these most frequently cited benefits became especially apparent later in the day, when participants readily acknowledged that business and other professional programs now regularly embed problem-solving exercises and intensive attention to communication and leadership skills in their curricula. As a result, advocates of the liberal arts, it was agreed, must be rigorous in identifying genuinely distinctive attributes. Two such contributions from the liberal arts fields, then, are the cultural competence and historical perspective that emanate from the humanities and social sciences. A third, perhaps, is the critical appraisal of personal and social values and the resulting intercultural dialogue at the center of liberal arts courses across the curriculum. Still a fourth element, for many, is experience with the contrasting modes of thoughts represented by the arts and the sciences. Finally, among the most important contributions is the capacity for ethical, values-based decision making within a changing environment.



Somehow we have failed miserably in communicating to students and parents the importance of a well-rounded education in the business world. Today, perhaps more than ever, we need the depth of perspective that a liberal arts education can bring to decision making, product development, leadership, and other dimensions of business.

—Marvin Suomi, Kajima Corporation

These general points can be encapsulated in four core attributes of effective leadership that often are the direct results of liberal arts education:

- ability to place key decisions in broader social and historical contexts;
- self-critical appreciation of one's cultural and personal values;
- capacity for cross-cultural understanding; and
- skills in problem solving amidst complexity and ambiguity.

Barriers to Connecting Liberal Arts Education and Effective Leadership

Barriers Within Academe. A subsequent conversation at the meeting focused on the barriers that prevent deeper understanding of the benefits of the liberal arts. The presidents were particularly self-critical. All readily acknowledged barriers within academe: narrow specialization; the traditional insularity of many academics, including disdain for the business world; the relatively ineffectual “packaging” of the benefits of liberal arts education; and the failure of private colleges to articulate sufficiently “the value proposition” to offset the “sticker shock” felt by parents and students of all but the wealthiest families.

Presidents also concurred that the absence of a shared understanding within academe of liberal arts education is a significant barrier, but there was disagreement about the nature of and reasons for the failure. For some, colleges have weakened their commitment to the liberal arts by bowing to market pressures and introducing pre-professional programs; for others, this purist conception of the liberal arts tends to ignore the integrating purpose of liberal arts education, fulfilled both in general education and in professional as well as liberal arts majors. Not surprisingly, it became apparent that schools send inconsistent, even conflicting, messages to potential students and the public, with some identifying the liberal arts with study in specific disciplines and others focusing on college-wide curricular and co-curricular experiences and the individualized learning characteristic of most small, residential colleges. Similarly, several presidents and business executives applauded the practical benefits of the liberal arts and the

increased emphasis on experiential education, but there was also discomfort, as expressed by Charles Beirne, lest the intrinsic value of reflection, contemplation, and learning be undervalued.

Barriers Within Business. Some participants saw a significant disparity between the enthusiasm of many executives for the liberal arts and the hiring practices of their companies, noting that business also tends to overvalue specialization. Recent economic pressures were cited as a reason why many businesses have become less willing to provide specialized training to broadly educated employees. Yet, as some participants observed, there was relatively little discussion during the Symposium about barriers in the business world to appreciating the liberal arts. Partly, commented Harry Davis, this reflects the sympathetic attitudes of the executives in attendance. For Miller, Young, and others, it also reflects business' relative satisfaction with higher education and recognition that the necessary strengthening of graduates' communication skills requires improvements in K-12 education. Technically trained leaders also flourish in business, noted Browning, thereby diminishing business' sense of urgency about liberal arts education.

Societal Barriers. Regrettable social trends and public attitudes were also cited by presidents and business executives as barriers to appreciation of the liberal arts. Foremost among these views were the perceived



Marlin Miller of Arrow International and other executives who attended the Symposium said that while business is relatively satisfied with higher education, necessary strengthening of graduates' communication skills requires improvements in K-12 education.

elitism and impracticality of liberal arts education; careerist pressures on students and the stigma of being an “undecided student”; the cult of “immediacy” in contemporary culture and the diminished importance of reading and reflection; and the prevailing view of education as a commodity and the proliferation of low-priced competitors.

Questioning Assumptions About Liberal Arts Education

Several important and long-standing issues that were discussed included the future role of liberal arts colleges in providing liberal arts education and its larger social purpose.

What is the future role of “liberal arts colleges” in providing liberal arts education? Browning asked, for example, if shrinking enrollments or jobless graduates were “driving the concerns of liberal arts colleges.” MacDowell and Richard Cook observed that the term “endangered species” accurately describes the liberal arts college (though not the liberal arts themselves); the number of schools graduating most of their students with liberal arts majors has shrunk considerably over the past two decades. Small schools with more comprehensive offerings, including professional programs, usually struggle with enrollment in some

cyclical pattern and currently face heightened competition. Only the most “heavily endowed colleges,” Cook noted, are immune from these challenges.

While concurring that schools with large endowments have sufficient buffer against enrollment trends, Andy Ford commented that even these better-positioned colleges seem to play a less influential role in contemporary higher education. Cook and John Bachmann observed that society’s devaluing of the BA degree and the proliferation of low-priced options, including multi-site state schools and for-profit colleges, are important competitive challenges. This is a classic example of oversupply, agreed Browning, who called for strategies tailored to the situation (not traditional measures). Lomax cautioned against a bunker mentality, reminding colleagues that such times are opportune for clarifying mission and for initiating appropriate adjustments to current market and societal needs. Advocacy of and partnerships with liberal arts colleges are also in business’ self-interest, noted Beirne, given global competitive pressures and the need to prepare current and future business leaders. Many of the lesser-known small colleges, Tom Flynn observed, have been leaders in undergraduate curricular reform and in improving student learning and now must articulate the “value-added” benefits for their students. Overall, it is important that a range of liberal arts institutions assume national leadership roles in higher education and in the public discourse.



CIC is grateful to the James S. Kemper Foundation for the generous donation that supported the Symposium, and to **Thomas Hellie**, executive director of the Foundation, who participated in the day-long Symposium.

How might liberal arts education better serve future students? Rather than decrying attitudes unfavorable to the liberal arts, participants expressed the belief that educators and the public should question some widely shared assumptions about liberal arts education. Several were critical of the tendency to compartmentalize liberal arts studies and wondered if alternative approaches are needed: Should liberal arts education target primarily young adults? Should it ideally be an important dimension of mid-career professional development? Should some dimensions be conceived as foundational, others understood as better suited for advanced — even graduate — studies, and some introduced (or re-emphasized) as subsequent, “continuing” education?

Others criticized the exaggerated claims made by liberal arts proponents about the benefits of liberal arts

study. Even if inadvertently, these claims undervalue the contributions of professional education. Don't professional programs often develop educational capacities and analytic skills formerly associated exclusively with the liberal arts? Doesn't contemporary business education, especially within liberal arts colleges, frequently put more intentional focus on developing students' capacities for collaborative and integrated thinking? Doesn't the comparatively recent emphasis in liberal arts programs on experiential and field-based education reflect lessons learned from professional programs? Should liberal arts and professional education be more intentionally integrated? Or at least should not both liberal arts and professional education be seen as essential and complementary?

What are the larger social purposes of liberal arts education? Toward the close of discussion, several participants posed a challenge concerning the larger civic purpose of liberal arts education: Why has higher education failed to persuade most business, civic, and political leaders to advocate for the vital social role of liberal arts education in a democracy? Economic pressures in American life and the accompanying vocational pressures on students and colleges are obvious factors. Also cited was the decline in prestige of the land-grant institution's social utility and the perceived disengagement from society of both large research universities and small colleges. Several presi-



The importance of a multidisciplinary education — and one of the larger social purposes of a liberal arts education — “is the ability to translate knowledge into effective action,” said NOVA Research CEO **Peggy Young**.

dents noted that the increased emphasis on global perspectives often minimizes attention to American society; all too often, it was noted, diversity requirements in the curriculum force a choice of American or global focus. Other participants questioned whether the traditional liberal arts terminology has lost its public meaning. Still others saw a need to recapture the educational tradition of Thomas Jefferson, with its emphasis on education as necessary to democratic citizenship, while Peggy Young and others emphasized the need to appeal to today's students in a language appropriate to their culture and aspirations.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The meeting's final session delved further into these provocative questions. Participants highlighted the need for both research and action but also for more compelling rhetoric to “make the case” for the liberal arts. Current data are essential, according to both presidents and business leaders, including comprehensive research studies and more focused efforts targeted to key attributes of a liberal arts education. Specific initiatives were also identified that educational and business leaders could undertake both to strengthen liberal arts education and to advocate more effectively for its value. Yet mindful of the competing notions and perspectives evident in the day's deliberations, participants stressed the importance of developing a clearer and more widely shared understanding of the benefits of a liberal arts education.

Research Studies. Participants, particularly the presidents, readily conceded that the benefits of the liberal arts tend to be asserted rather than demonstrated. Among the unexamined assumptions, for example, is the belief that any liberal arts major inherently produces the desired results and that all configurations of general education requirements, including those organized around loose distribution requirements, are somehow comparably successful in achieving the aims of liberal arts education. Since there are a paucity of data, more rigorous analysis is needed to link the subjects and methods of student learning to specific goals. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was seen as a promising development in this regard.

Several ambitious research topics were identified as especially important to document the short- and long-term benefits of liberal arts education for business careers:

- new longitudinal studies, paralleling Robert Beck's 1981 assessment of AT&T's management personnel, that would analyze the patterns of career mobility for graduates, linked to particular fields of study, or in particular companies;
- additional longitudinal studies of alumni/ae, such as the Hardwick-Day studies of various groups of colleges;
- studies analyzing credible "success measures" for essential elements of a liberal arts education — such as the development of intercultural perspective, civic responsibility, and ethical decision-making skills; and
- most importantly, the compilation and dissemination of existing research and the systematic development of a new research agenda.

Action Steps. The Symposium's participants proposed a comprehensive approach for crafting and disseminating a cohesive message:

- development of a national coalition of educational, business, civic, and political leaders to clarify the challenge, shape the message, and serve as public advocates for undergraduate liberal arts education;
- op-ed pieces written jointly by academic and business leaders;
- expanded presence of business leaders, especially alumni, in student recruiting programs for liberal arts colleges;
- local or regional symposia linking educational and business leaders with high school guidance counselors and high school seniors;
- expansion of business internships and other options for liberal arts students; and
- reciprocal internships (and dialogue) between colleges and businesses, involving faculty and management personnel.

The group's strong consensus included some important cautions. One participant noted the need to incorporate leaders in law and medicine and the full range of professions, lest the message be misperceived as a narrow appeal to the corporate sector. Another counseled that the critical perspective on

social institutions (including business) that is at the heart of a liberal arts education needs to be respected and enhanced. Equally important was candid dialogue about the perception of elitism in the liberal arts.

Familiar platitudes stated more emphatically would be insufficient, all agreed. For some, it was essential to recognize the transformational impact of liberal arts education in ways that reach beyond specific skills to include more abstract attributes. Other participants saw a more pressing need to analyze the often unexamined assumptions about the liberal arts disciplines and to explore the shared benefits of interdisciplinary studies, the integration of liberal and professional education, and effective student learning practices. Critical to the success of any national effort, all agreed, is the willingness of educational leaders to articulate a clearer conception of the liberal arts — one that is both broadly inclusive and yet sufficiently distinctive.

The CIC Symposium demonstrated that effective public advocacy will require not only compelling rhetoric but also compelling data. Business executives and college presidents endorsed liberal arts education as critical to the health of our democracy and to democratic leadership. And there was unanimity that today's young people and tomorrow's leaders need to be inspired and guided by liberal arts inquiry and the engaged learning practices especially prevalent at the American small college.



During a discussion of long-term steps that CIC and college presidents could take to bring the liberal arts and business closer together, **John W. Bachmann**, managing partner of the international financial services firm, Edward Jones (MO), suggested that not only business leaders, but also doctors, lawyers, and other professionals should engage in similar discussions.

Individual Statements on the Liberal Arts and Business

Prior to the meeting, participants — as well as others who expressed interest in the subject — were asked to prepare brief personal statements or submit previous writings that would highlight their opinions about the benefits of a liberal arts education, problems that hamper a more effective relationship between the liberal arts and business, and the actions that could make a difference. Following the Symposium, many participants submitted revised statements or articles they had written regarding their perspectives on these issues. The following is a sample of those writings.

**MARVIN SUOMI, PRESIDENT AND CEO,
KAJIMA CORPORATION**

Somehow we have failed miserably in communicating to students and parents the importance of a well-rounded education in the business world. Today, perhaps more than ever, we need the depth of perspective that a liberal arts education can bring to decision making, product development, leadership, [and other dimensions of business].

**PEGGY YOUNG, PRESIDENT AND CEO,
NOVA RESEARCH**

Many needs of business are best met in a comprehensive, carefully planned and executed liberal arts curriculum. Specific needs include: writing and communication skills training, both in the major field and in general; personal and business relationships training; personal “whole health” modalities; personal and business ethics; different modes of learning and thinking; and the importance of multidisciplinary education — translating knowledge into effective action.

**ARTHUR RASMUSSEN (CITING BRUCE COLE),
FORMER CHAIRMAN, HOUSEHOLD INTERNATIONAL**

What should be taught and learned in the [liberal arts] curriculum? A true core curriculum is the foundation

that includes required courses of breadth and depth of the major disciplines.... Why is a required curriculum important? Roughly half of the students in freshman year change their minds on their majors or life pursuits and change their objectives in subsequent years. A true core curriculum informs students about the broad fields of knowledge that enable them to make informed choices about their futures that would not be possible from their exposure to highly specialized, narrow courses.

**MURRAY DASHE, CHAIRMAN, PRESIDENT & CEO,
COST PLUS, INC.**

I doubt that business folk will ever buy into education for its own sake, but there is, within the senior ranks of the business community, great appreciation for the applicability of certain key aspects of a liberal arts education: development of effective communication skills, deep analysis of issues/problems, and the ability to construct effective solutions to such problems. Most business leaders recognize the need for the development of positive character and leadership traits, as more important and more necessary than the development of specific job skills. Thus, a good fit with a liberal arts education.

I do worry that the academic purists may ignore the benefits to business already built into a liberal arts education that is damaging to the business world's perception of a liberal arts education and to the marketing of liberal arts colleges. My solution, both personal and theoretical, would be to “cross-pollinate” business and liberal arts by exposing representatives to the other's world.

At my company, a modest experiment in summer college student internships two years ago has grown into a program that identifies and develops future employees, and we are very happy with the results. It would be interesting to expand the program to encompass brief professorial internships, and we will work on that. Conversely, I love the notion of providing my executives with some campus exposure, which might bring the added benefit of exposing students to business world problems and thinking.

“A true core curriculum informs students about the broad fields of knowledge that enable them to make informed choices about their futures that would not be possible from their exposure to highly specialized, narrow courses.”

—Arthur Rasmussen, Household International



Finally, I think it is important to find a way to convince liberal arts educators that the benefits to business already built into a liberal arts education are worthy of being marketed, extolled, and “sold,” rather than being pushed into the background, almost as an uncomfortable and unintended consequence.

A New Social Context for Liberal Education

KAREN HALBERSLEBEN, PRESIDENT,
NORTHLAND COLLEGE

Liberal arts education leads, by definition, to the lifelong discovery and consideration of connections with other humans past, present, and future, and with the rest of creation. As such, liberal education possesses civic and social purposes that have become uniquely critical at this time and in this place. We have passed the point where educating leaders without this immediate and pressing sense of connection is sufficient. The choice is becoming abundantly clear: we must either get another planet or we must create a new model of the fulfilled life. In the 21st century, small liberal arts colleges can lead the way in explicitly educating for an understanding of the responsibility each of us has to the future of the planet and to the generations that follow us: of thinking in systems that are environmentally sustainable and socially just.

Do educators today have the courage needed to proclaim unpopular truths: that ensuring that the basic needs for all are met must take precedence over providing an outsized standard of living for a few; that the path to enduring peace and freedom lies in the pursuit of social equity built on sustainable prosperity?

Education has helped create the dominance humankind now exerts on the planet. Education must now provide the means to stop the devastation we have created, and to repair what we can. Liberal

education is uniquely able to do this by inculcating a sense of wonder and connection; liberal education can do this by honing the critical facilities that lead us to sustain the world we have created. Liberal education is uniquely able to do this because of its strong value orientation, its ethical conscientiousness, and the way it teaches awareness of self within a larger context. And liberal education shares, with environmental consciousness, the mandate that people take responsibility for their actions.

We must do more than return to a traditional understanding of liberal education. The time has come to announce a new *social* context for what we do, and to move from “learning for learning’s sake” to “learning for all our sakes.”

The Liberal Arts as Human Capital for Business

THOMAS KEPPEL, PRESIDENT, JUNIATA COLLEGE

How does a liberal arts education relate to a career in business?

The Facts:

The purpose of a business is to maximize profit now and consistently over the long run.

The purpose of a liberal arts education is to prepare one for a life well lived.

Liberal arts colleges and universities are one of many sources of human capital for business.

The Question:

Is there common cause among liberal arts institutions and business?

I would submit that there is more common cause than perhaps now appreciated by either party. First, while liberal arts graduates are a small percentage of

total business employees, they fill a disproportionately large percentage of the upper and top positions in business.

Second, presidents of liberal arts institutions believe that our students are prepared for a life well lived, especially through the development of ethical values to guide their professional and personal lives. One of many examples is a Juniata alumnus who decided to leave Enron in January 1997 after nine months in the company's corporate finance department. "It was a harsh, rude atmosphere and they already were doing things I considered unethical which led to my decision to leave. Unfortunately, they couldn't have gotten away with it for so long unless others were willing to look the other way to make more money and retain positions of power."

Third, while businesses really need the skills of our graduates, liberal arts institutions have not been particularly good at communicating clearly how the skills acquired in a liberal arts program match closely the needs of business. This is partly because of the great diversity of approaches to the liberal arts. There is no universal definition among us. Even in a college with a highly structured liberal arts curriculum, individual students graduate with varying experiences. While we will never agree on one definition, it is important for us to agree on the skills our graduates should acquire and how they relate to a successful business career.

Fourth, many business leaders understand that it is in the best interest of businesses to be sure some rational number of their employees are liberal arts graduates. According to Stephen Wolf, chairman of U.S. Airways, "...a singular focus on getting a well-paying job leaves open the possibility that many young people will enter the workplace superbly trained in a technical sense but less ready to embrace life in general or less interested in our society beyond the workplace. This is worrisome." Michael Rao, chancellor of Montana State University, concurs, based on his discussions with local business leaders. "As we moved beyond the superficial discussions to ongoing forms of professional exchange, we were surprised at how quickly the dialogue shifted from support for students' technical preparation to a need for education in liberal arts and sciences.... We learned that businesses competing in a global market-

place are not looking for skilled technicians; they're seeking well-rounded workers who can think critically, apply knowledge, and communicate with others."

Finally, liberal arts colleges are taking on the challenge of preparing our students for a life well lived in a very different world. For example, Juniata's Strategic Planning Committee recognizes the need to prepare our students for success:

"...No college can successfully plan for the 21st century without first identifying the major challenges and opportunities for which its students must be prepared. We, therefore, identified the dominant characteristics that will define our graduates' world. The characteristics of this new and interdependent Global Community include:

- enormous advances in biotechnology and medicine;
- ubiquitous information technology;
- unprecedented entrepreneurial opportunity;
- environmental limitations;
- frequent interactions with people and cultures outside our own;
- conflicts of increasing complexity and danger; and
- changes in the content and delivery of education."

Graduates prepared for these issues will be ready to be leaders in business.

Education of the Whole Person

CHARLES J. BEIRNE, S.J., PRESIDENT,
LE MOYNE COLLEGE

"Is this going to be on the exam?" "I'm going to be an accountant, why should I waste time wading through history?" "After paying all these tuition bills, I want my daughter to be able to get a job!"

Ever since I walked into my first classroom as a teacher in 1963, I have heard variations on the above themes played over and over again. Oddly enough, the most pragmatic approach to education as preparation for career is not an iron-bound link between specific courses and one's first job, but a good liberal arts education. Executives in a wide gamut of professional fields affirm this, even though one might expect that a chief financial officer would urge a fledgling or would-



“Oddly enough, the most pragmatic approach to education as preparation for career is not an iron-bound link between specific courses and one’s first job, but a good liberal arts education. Executives in a wide gamut of professional fields affirm this.”

—Charles J. Beirne, Le Moyne College

be analyst to stock up on finance courses — learning more and more about less and less.

But even if a liberal arts education could boast no more than a murky connection with the “real” world, nevertheless we at Le Moyne would tout its value, especially as part of our Catholic, Jesuit educational tradition.

John Henry Cardinal Newman tried to launch a Catholic university for Ireland in the middle of the 19th century through a series of lectures and essays entitled *The Idea of a University*. Newman’s context differed greatly from our own; he wanted Irish, Catholic “gentlemen” to enjoy the benefit of an education already possessed by their British counterparts. But his insights go well beyond their own pragmatic purpose to convince the Irish hierarchy to come up with funds for the proposed institution.

Newman saw all varieties of knowledge as “forming one whole” and helping one develop a “habit of life.” He saw knowledge as “its own end” and only then as a good for other purposes. “When the intellect has once been properly trained and formed to have a connected view or grasp of things, it will display its powers with more or less effect according to its particular quality and capacity in the individual.” Newman emphasized the training of the mind: “this habit of method, of starting from fixed points, of making his ground as he goes, of distinguishing what he knows from what he does not know....” He calls upon the college or university to educate “the intellect to reason well in all matters, to reach out towards truth, and to grasp it.”

If students throw themselves into educational opportunities with spontaneity and trust, they might even experience joy, and who knows, they might even come up with some nuggets of “usefulness.” They will get help to organize their thoughts, to craft arguments with imagination and clarity, and even to enjoy curling up in a comfy chair with a good book. Such a person can learn to enjoy so many dimensions of life,

and at the same time, raise the odds on being prepared for getting a job. But the results of a good liberal education will probably have a greater impact on one’s 4th or 5th job. The investment is worth it!

The Liberally Educated Worker

**WILLIAM P. ROBINSON, PRESIDENT,
WHITWORTH COLLEGE**

Exactly one week after the terrorist attacks, now referred to grimly as 9/11, it was my lot to stand before 1,200 business people and summarize the achievements of the Spokane Regional Chamber of Commerce during the year I was concluding as Chair of the Chamber Board. As the second largest city in a state known for technology, we were in pain. The inordinate number of companies supplying technology goods and services couldn’t downsize fast enough, as they lost customers daily. The world was in shock over the most audacious terrorist act in U.S. history.

In a sense, that moment in time brought together forces that confirmed what I had been hearing for the past two years as chair and chair-elect. Employers repeatedly claimed that prosperity for their businesses and industries rested on people of integrity who see, understand and communicate “the big picture.” Technological capacity is not enough. As spokesperson for our state and federal lobbying efforts, particularly on energy-related issues, I had been required to learn more about various technologies than I ever wanted to know. And in so doing, I became more convinced than ever that technology’s potential and moral valence rested exclusively in how humans chose to use it.

My conclusions correlate almost directly with the findings of the Northern Virginia Community College’s comprehensive survey in which 1,621 businesses identified the qualities they most sought in workers:

Survey results indicated that employers appeared to place more emphasis on personal or general characteristics rather than on specific work-related skills. Work ethics, communication abilities, the ability to learn on the job, motivation and initiative, and working with others were skills considered by the majority of employers to be “very important.” In addition, a large percentage of the employers also rated employee characteristics such as the ability to solve job-related problems, interpersonal skills, overall preparation for employment, and reading and comprehension skills as either “very important” or “important.” In comparison, less than half of the employers indicated that skills such as special technical job skills or work experience were “very important.” The findings of the Business Needs Assessment Survey are similar to the findings of some national studies (<http://www.nv.cc.va.us/oir/reports/empchar.htm>).

Clearly, the liberally educated worker gets the prize in today’s high-tech work world. Why is this? Based on what I have heard and observed, I offer the following explanations:

- *Appreciation for complexity.* Today’s business environment is extraordinarily complex. H.L. Mencken once mused, “for every complex problem there is a simple solution, and it’s wrong.” Narrowly educated workers are likely to see issues and approach problems through the prism of their disciplines. It’s self-evident that their tendency toward reductionism would be greater than that of the liberal arts graduate. Breadth in one’s education leads to breadth of perspective.
- *Appreciation for communication effectiveness.* No liberal arts graduate can overlook the crucial role of expression in the development of humankind. Certainly the humanities make the point strongly and clearly, but even the history of math and science rests on the ways in which information was disseminated. Liberal arts graduates love ideas, but they recognize the impotence of ideas weakly communicated.
- *Appreciation for “why?”* Today’s greatest issues are neither technological nor financial. They are moral. To the monists, there is only one right answer. To the relativists, there are no right

answers. To the pluralists, there are both right and wrong answers, and more than one of each. The 9/11 attacks were delivered by monists. The relativists didn’t have much gunpowder for mounting a moral defense of the atrocities. But liberal arts graduates are offered the opportunity to find moral unity built on a pluralistic foundation. When they ask why, it is neither the rhetorical question of the monist nor the desperate question of the relativist. It is an honest question that looks for cultural, political, historical, scientific, and economic insight. And it is a question whose answers require a moral defense. This is what the liberal arts offer; this is what employers so desperately want and need in their companies.

Why Does Business Need Liberal Arts Graduates?

ANDREW T. FORD, PRESIDENT, WABASH COLLEGE

Perhaps it is natural for those in the liberal arts, at the heart of the ancient academy, and those in business, at the vortex of the modern economy, to look across the divide and wonder what they could possibly have to do with each other. One is anchored in the wisdom of the ages, the other tossed by the uncertainties of an onrushing future. The answer is: everything.

Consider business, the workroom of the house where higher education sends its graduates to live. In a globally competitive, technologically driven economy, why should business bother with liberal arts graduates? Surely the multitudes technically trained at community colleges and the vast numbers receiving general degrees at universities can provide all the bodies, skill sets, and data reservoirs required to keep the wheels of capitalism spinning. What more does business need?

For starters, it needs leaders, more leaders than ever as organizational structures mutate from hierarchical command-and-control armies to flat develop-and-motivate teams. Dispersed leadership is in high demand, and while dispersion is relatively easy, leadership is not. The graduate of an effective liberal arts college will have had ample opportunities to lead — not simply participate — in multiple

“At the effective liberal arts college, professors match the texts and questions of the curriculum with the challenges and issues of the students’ lifetime. That test of relevance... is the bridge from business to the liberal arts, just as rigor is the bridge from the liberal arts to business.”
—Andrew Ford, Wabash College



extracurricular activities that formed a core component of his or her education. He or she also will have demonstrated intellectual leadership in the classroom, going toe-to-toe with professors and classmates in the search for explanations that illuminated, persuaded, and motivated.

Second to leadership is business’ constant need for effective answers to complex questions. Innovative and creative thought is becoming an imperative for competitive differentiation. This thinking requires not narrow technical skills but a critical and analytical mind — one that can grasp the depth and breadth of context; spot relevant patterns and trends; convert raw data to useful information and apply it to the challenges at hand; express thoughts, opinions, and arguments clearly, concisely, and convincingly (in both the written and spoken word, and preferably in more than one language); and generally provide valuable ideas and answers to hard questions in uncertain environments. The graduate of an effective liberal arts institution has developed the strengths and flexibilities of such a mind.

The need for responsibility in business seems on everyone’s mind. Living in a liberal arts environment demands of the student increased responsibility, not only to others but also to oneself. It is an environment of relative personal freedom where choices about individual behavior flow into the consideration of ethical and moral questions that for centuries have haunted mankind. Business is no haven from these questions, and liberal arts students begin to confront them directly, long before they graduate.

Business requires substantial breadth. If the notion of business is expanded to enterprise more generally, then the liberal arts graduate may support social and civic enterprise, artistic and scientific enterprise, governmental and educational enterprise. These are all businesses in a sense, even if with a bent toward society rather than profit. The liberal arts graduate, survivor of a curriculum that reaches across the

endeavors of mankind, can move effectively among institutions with substantially different missions.

As breadth increases so do complexity and the need for collaboration. For example, if a region seeks to upgrade its economy, then its local government, businesses, and civic sector must work together to generate a resource base that can sustain and improve quality of life. The humane instinct to work for the common good, not solely individual profit, also results from an effective liberal arts education. It in turn becomes the glue that holds cooperative efforts together. In a transparent world growing smaller, even fierce competitors in capitalism recognize the virtue and the value of collaborating for the common good.

Business thus looks to liberal arts education for the rigor that builds critical, creative, responsible, and humane minds. This is but one-half of the natural partnership. The liberal arts must look to business for the applications of such rigor.

The texts of ancient Greece and Rome, the arts of the Renaissance and the Chinese dynasties, the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment and ancient India — like all other ancient and recent, foreign and familiar, subjects of the liberal arts, these drive rigor into thought but benefit from applications to our lives today. We can learn from then, but we live now. Effective liberal arts education brings learning to life, because without practical linkages graduates have information but not knowledge, preparation but not experience, recognition but not readiness.

At the effective liberal arts college, professors match the texts and questions of the curriculum with the challenges and issues of the students’ lifetime. That test of relevance — will what and how we teach, and what and how our students learn, matter in their lives? — is the bridge from business to the liberal arts, just as rigor is the bridge from the liberal arts to business.

Business errs if it devalues the rigors of a liberal arts education, and the liberal arts college errs if it

ignores the need for relevance. The opportunities, issues, complexities, and related needs of enterprise today mirror those found in the liberal arts curriculum. When the student understands that, she or he better appreciates the value of the education and grows more motivated to pursue it diligently, to the benefit of both the liberal arts college and the future business employer.

The Liberal Arts and Character Education

JONATHAN DEFELICE, O.S.B., PRESIDENT,
SAINT ANSELM COLLEGE

The link between leadership and learning is not only essential at the community level. It is even more indispensable in world affairs. Ignorance and misinformation can handicap the progress of a city or a company, but they can, if allowed to prevail in foreign policy, handicap this country's security. In a world of complex and continuing problems, in a world full of frustrations and irritations, America's leadership must be guided by the lights of learning and reason. (President John F. Kennedy in remarks prepared for delivery at the Trade Mart in Dallas, November 22, 1963)

Kennedy's 1963 remarks prepared for a group of business leaders underscore the connection between industry and government and the importance of educating for leadership in all aspects of society. These words remind us as educators that we share a common struggle and a common duty to educate citizens for leadership in a world that will never be free from the "frustrations and irritations" of our human existence.

At Saint Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire, we have struggled with the reality that the modern liberal arts college has the responsibility to do much more than simply impart knowledge and award degrees. While the business department here is home to the greatest number of majors in our 2000-student population, courses are taught in the context of a classical liberal arts foundation. That core curriculum with its emphasis on discovering the characteristics of true greatness, and the unending

search for truth in all its forms, seeks to engage and inspire students to become more than simply functionaries in the business world, but to view themselves as moral and principled human beings with a compelling duty to embrace their role as citizens of the world's oldest democracy.

Business has a greater practical impact on our standard of living and quality of life than perhaps any other institution (perhaps even greater than government or church). When business is narrowly understood to be merely about making money and maximizing profits, it is profoundly misunderstood. Business provides employment. Our citizens spend more time at work than in any other aspect of their lives. What we do at work and how we do it has a social impact that has never been fully measured. Business plays the determining role in considering what is made, its quality, its social impact, and its effect on the human and natural environment. Business creates human working environments that impact our nation for good or for ill. Business creates and distributes wealth that determines the standard of living for an entire nation. Business has the power to enrich us, elevate us, feed us, clothe us, house us, transport us, and inspire us. It has the power also to impoverish us and to break us — both economically and morally. That is why liberal arts colleges particularly must rise to the occasion of developing educated women and men who will engage in the work of business with moral integrity and principled decision-making abilities.

We live in a world in which we tend to credit our economic and material success to tax policy, market variations, and consumer choice. While these factors do play a determining role in the quality of our lives, the choices that leaders in business make influence the conduct of all citizens. Given its influence, business should be looking for the best our colleges have to offer. Our best must include creativity and vision, ethics and character, and an approach to work that is grounded on moral principles and intellectual honesty. These characteristics are the foundation upon which a liberal arts education is predicated.

I believe that character education is essential to developing the modern business leader and that such education is best achieved in the context of a liberal arts curriculum. Character education is a foundation



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—Jonathan DeFelice, Saint Anselm College

upon which we develop men and women who can achieve academic excellence, personal integrity, and achievement. It is also the cornerstone which gives rise to individual involvement in the community, government, and the economic affairs of a nation. To do less is to ignore our belief that the economic prosperity of a thriving democracy is contingent on citizens who understand the opportunities and obligations of that democracy.

I believe that we need to explore more deeply unique educational reforms that build a bridge between education for the business world and education for life because the two cannot and should not be viewed as independent of one another. These reforms are predicated on the belief that a business education in a liberal arts college must be guided by a belief that education in its fullest sense is inescapably a moral enterprise. I must believe also that nurturing character and virtue has a place in classrooms where business and economics, accounting and computer science, marketing and communication are taught. The liberal arts college that awards degrees in business must do so in an environment where art, literature, history, and philosophy are valued as indispensable to the modern business leader. Ultimately, a complete approach to business education must balance the study of business with the study of what it means to an educated woman or man with the capacity and moral stamina to effect positive change in our world through the “lights of learning and reason.”

Integrating Liberal and Professional Study

TODD S. HUTTON, PRESIDENT, UTICA COLLEGE

In a recent interview with Dick Hersh, [then] President of Trinity College, Katherine Grayson (Liberal Ed in Crisis, *University Business*, January

2003, 14-19) asked whether there is sufficient time to save liberal arts education. Although she referred specifically to the completion of a study documenting learning outcomes in 1,200 students across the country, the question itself is both intriguing and alarming. It is intriguing because it suggests that at least some people in our society believe that a centuries-old tradition is at the precipice of collapse. It is alarming because social and market forces may indeed be at work, reacting to perceptions of rigidity and irrelevancy in the liberal arts.

I would answer Katherine Grayson by saying that the liberal arts do not need saving. They need defining, clarifying, interpreting, revising, and adapting, but not saving.

I will devote little time in this paper to exclaiming the benefits of a liberal arts education. I will, instead, focus my attention on 1) the problems that hamper a more effective relationship between the liberal arts and business, and 2) those action steps that can make a difference, that is, create a more symbiotic relationship between the liberal arts and business.

The first problem is that the liberal arts are not monolithic. Our use of the term makes it seem so, but the limitations of labels and our inability to express the many differences and nuances among different conceptions of liberal study obscure the fact that there is no definition of the liberal arts. For example, what should belong in the “core” curriculum of a college? Does a liberal arts curriculum include business economics? Can a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre be considered a liberal arts degree or are the only “legitimate” liberal arts degrees Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees in an arts and science discipline? Questions such as these illustrate the different perspectives on the nature of the liberal arts, and institutions have answered such questions in many different ways. A century ago, the disciplines of sociology and psychology were stepchildren of the arts and

sciences. It was only in the last half of the last century that computer science found its way into liberal arts curricula. As society has evolved, so has the definition of the liberal arts.

The notion of the liberal arts is also confounded by the imprecise and evolving classifications we have for colleges and universities, as well as by the market decisions that determine the use of the words “college” or “university.” Take, for example, the classifications defined by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Prior to 1994, the Foundation classified baccalaureate institutions that awarded more than half of their degrees in the arts and sciences as Liberal Arts Colleges I & II, with the distinction between the two based upon the composite SAT score of entering first-year students. In 1994, the Foundation changed the name of the classifications to “Baccalaureate (Liberal Arts) Colleges I” and “Baccalaureate Colleges II.” Institutions included in either of these classifications had to award 40 percent or more of their baccalaureate degrees in liberal arts fields. In other words, an institution could award 60 percent of its undergraduate degrees in professional fields but still be classified as a liberal arts college. With the most recent revision in 2001, Carnegie returned to the 50 percent threshold and revised the terms to “Baccalaureate Colleges-Liberal Arts” and “Baccalaureate Colleges-General.” If we add to the equation the fact that a liberal arts college with a traditional arts and science curriculum (whatever that is), one master’s degree, and 1,200 students can call itself a university; a college with a medical school may call itself a college; and a college with eight master’s degrees and two doctorates cannot (at least in one state) call itself a university, it is no wonder there may be some confusion, and even qualms, among the general public about what might constitute a liberal arts education. While the issues of classification and market-induced labeling do not speak directly to the question of the definition and content of the liberal arts, they do help frame the context for a dialogue about the relationship between the liberal arts and business.

A third problem relates to the nature of a genuine liberal arts education: How much of the liberal arts is enough to call a student’s course of study a liberal arts education? With regional accrediting bodies requiring

that general education constitute a substantial portion of a student’s course of study, whether at small “liberal arts” colleges or major research universities, can we say that most students today are receiving a liberal arts education? Or is it a matter that some receive a “pure” liberal education, that is, general education and a liberal arts major and minor, as opposed to general education and a career-related major with either a liberal arts or vocational minor or additional courses in the major.

I agree with Joan Stark and Malcolm Lowther who insisted 15 years ago that liberal and professional study need not be mutually exclusive. In fact, the demands of the world in which we live today require new ways of thinking about old divisions between the liberal arts and professional programs. Stark and Lowther put it aptly, “The crux of today’s educational problem is how to integrate liberal and professional study effectively, building upon the best that each has to offer.” (Stark, Joan S. and Malcolm A. Lowther. *Strengthening the Ties That Bind: Integrating Undergraduate Liberal and Professional Study*. Report of the Professional Preparation Network, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI: The Regents of the University of Michigan, 1988.) There are numerous obstacles to achieving this lofty goal, not the least of which is the question of the liberal arts definition. Stark and Lowther found, unsurprisingly, that professional studies faculty and liberal arts faculty tended to define the liberal arts differently.

It has been my experience that the differences rest primarily in the epistemology of the liberal arts, although I suspect that my own liberal arts faculty would take issue with me on this statement. Certainly professional curricula have appropriated language and goals related to skills, attitudes, and sensibilities that were once the domain of the liberal arts. Stated simply, it might be said that where professional study was once about learning how to “do” and liberal arts was once about learning how to “think,” the professions have made a concerted effort to bring “doing” and “thinking” closer together within their own curricula. A look at the newly adopted goals of Utica College’s revised business curriculum and other professional programs reveals learning objectives that we once reserved for the liberal arts. For example, we expect business majors to develop a capacity for



“The liberal arts do not need saving. They need defining, clarifying, interpreting, revising, and adapting, but not saving.”

—Todd Hutton, Utica College

critical thinking (e.g., incisiveness, skepticism), the ability to think broadly, to work outside the confines of the customary, and to master skills of analysis and synthesis through research. We also expect them to understand and respond positively to diversity, to understand and apply ethical principles and principles of social responsibility, to understand the challenges and opportunities of globalism (e.g., interdependent economies), and to demonstrate competency in verbal and written communication. One might say that these goals sound like a liberal arts education, with content being the primary differentiator between a business curriculum and a liberal arts major.

With knowledge expanding exponentially and with spirited debates continuing about the nature and content of the liberal arts — fueled in part by arguments a decade and a half ago in such works as Allan Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind* and E.D. Hirsch’s *Cultural Literacy* — it is apparent that questions about the definition of the liberal arts will not be answered any time soon. We must therefore ask ourselves whether the need to develop a more symbiotic relationship between the liberal arts and business is more a question of human will — particularly on the part of faculty and academic administrators — than it is a question of knowledge and skills. If the problem does indeed revolve around the former, then the “action steps that can make a difference” will need to revolve around strategies designed to engage liberal arts faculty and business leaders in dialogue and mutual efforts to support the integration of liberal and professional learning.

Among the action steps that may be worth consideration:

1. Learn from the work of the University of Michigan’s Professional Preparation Network and from the faculty at other institutions like Syracuse University. Initiatives such as these may offer insights to strategies that can bridge the liberal arts-business gulf.

2. Develop an agreement and alliance with a national organization such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to sponsor symposia in cities throughout the country that focus 1) dialogue among liberal arts faculty and business leaders with the goal of developing better understanding of each other’s professional values and goals, definitions of the liberal arts, and existing intersections between the purposes and outcomes of liberal arts curricula and business practice; and 2) identification of concrete and specific ways that faculty and business leaders can bridge the perceived gulf between liberal arts curricula and engagement in business enterprise by alumni of the liberal arts.
3. Engage organizations like the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business to examine the liberal arts components of business education and to co-sponsor the symposia with the Chamber of Commerce.

It has been said that overcoming physical barriers for people with disabilities is really a matter of overcoming attitudinal barriers. It is the same with the disaffection between the liberal arts and business. And the solution is the same: reasonable accommodation, in spirit and practice.

Two Traditions, One Student

BRYANT L. CURETON, PRESIDENT, ELMHURST COLLEGE

As we discuss the importance of the liberal arts tradition and how it might be revitalized in our colleges, it might be useful to consider its connection to the alternative tradition of professional preparation. Rather than thinking of this relationship as a zero-sum contest, we might explore the important synergy between the two approaches to learning. Each brings something essential to the other. Without liberal learning, prepara-

tion for particular work becomes narrow and disconnected from the context and purposes of that work. The highly trained accountant without any sense of what the numbers really mean in the larger world is, in fact, not well prepared for professional life. Similarly, an educated person who has pursued the liberal arts with no sense of what one might do in the world with such understanding is, in fact, not well educated.

If we have allowed the tradition of liberal learning to be viewed as the opposite of preparing for a career, it is because we have lost our grasp of what the concept meant to the builders of the tradition. The Greek and Roman philosophers and orators sought the best preparation for future citizens and leaders. The scholars of the Middle Ages saw the seven liberal arts as an appropriate pathway to the learned professions. Much the same case can be made that the best of professional preparation has always emphasized broadening experiences that reach beyond just the special skills of a job. Through the centuries, various forms of apprenticeship or junior status have often been aimed precisely at providing a rich context of human and ethical experience before one would be considered fully prepared.

By searching for a new integration of liberal learning and professional preparation, we are not subverting the two traditions we have tended to keep apart, but rather restoring the fullness of each. Breaking out of the boxes of our sterile debates will help us move closer to helping each student become both a true professional with solid ground on which to stand and profess something and a truly liberally educated person prepared to be and therefore to do. Liberal education and preparation for life's work desperately need each other. For just as liberal learning reminds us of the Socratic principle that "the unexamined life is not worth living," so experience teaches the complementary truth that the unlive life is not worth examining.

Liberal Arts Education Leads to Jobs

**MICHAEL A. MACDOWELL, PRESIDENT,
COLLEGE MISERICORDIA**

"Keep an Open Mind about Liberal Arts"
Times Leader, Wilkes-Barre, PA, January 13, 2004

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania plays host to more colleges and universities per capita than any other state in the nation. Because there are so many of them, the lamentations of our combined faculty, staff, and alumni about the "demise" of a liberal arts education is often heard. Those institutions which maintain a core curriculum believe that the liberal arts are important because they instill within graduates different ways of thinking, along with the ability to analyze situations and communicate both in writing and orally.

Together, these skills create "effective habits of the mind." The core courses in the liberal arts, such as English, history, the sciences, and philosophy also cultivate the development of an individual's values and attitudes or "the habits of the heart."

The fact of the matter is that the liberal arts prepare students for their entire lives, not just for their first jobs. This is important because most will change careers — not just jobs — two or three times during their lives.

While these goals are laudable and in many instances hardly disputable, the core of the liberal arts continues to wane on many campuses in favor of job-specific and technically-oriented courses.

Perhaps such a trend is inevitable in a society that places heavy emphasis on "what you want to be when you grow up." Parents, grandparents, and the schools themselves sometimes imply that youngsters are failures if they have not mapped out at least the first 20 years of their careers.

In fact, according to a poll designed by George Dehne & Associates and released last May, "From as early as their freshman year in high school, prospective college students are focused on what they will do when they go to work full time." In a volatile economy where businesses are less willing to train college graduates because of the competitive financial constraints, there is more pressure than ever to emerge from college with a baccalaureate in as specific — and hence "as employable" — a field as possible.

The irony, of course, is that most business and professional leaders continue to exhort the values of a liberal arts education for undergraduates. They want — and in many instances insist upon — the reasoning, oral presentation, analytical skills, and broader-based understanding that a core curriculum



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—Michael MacDowell, College Misericordia

in the sciences and math, social sciences, and humanities provides. During their freshman and sophomore years especially, college students need the breadth and depth of a liberal arts core in order to better choose a major.

Why, then, is there a disconnect between what business and professional leaders say is important, namely a liberal arts education, and many students’ and parents’ marginal belief in one? A recent symposium, attended by college presidents and CEOs of a variety of companies and organized by the Council of Independent Colleges with support from the Kemper Foundation, addressed this question and found that: colleges offer fuzzy definitions of and rationale for core courses; faculty whose advanced degrees often result in them “learning more and more about less” add to the problem; colleges lack data showing that liberal arts students in the long run obtain higher-paying and/or satisfying jobs.

Even if these questions are answered, they still may not overcome the entrenched belief that colleges and universities exist primarily to train students for a career. Of the 21 responsibilities of a college or university listed by Dehne, the most important for parents and students answering his survey was to “prepare its undergraduate students for a career.”

Perhaps the problem can best be addressed if colleges and universities strive to demonstrate the utility of the liberal arts by more explicitly tying them to the future aspirations of students. Institutions must prove that a good liberal arts education leads to a good job.

At College Misericordia, the Insalaco Center for Career Development helps all students, regardless of major, explore career opportunities early through a series of shadowing experiences, internships, computer competency skills, cultural competencies, and even training in business etiquette. These co-curricular and extracurricular activities are designed to link the liberal arts with applied learning and intentional career exploration. In fact, Misericordia guarantees the outcome to those students who collab-

orate with the Insalaco Center during their college experience. If after six months Misericordia graduates are not offered a job in their field or a spot in graduate school, we provide them with a paid internship which almost always leads to employment.

We have never had to make good on our guarantee because all College Misericordia graduates who possess the guarantee received quality job offers or are in graduate school. And by the way, 80 percent of those graduates are working in Pennsylvania and most of them in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

A few other colleges offer a similar guarantee. Other colleges have developed effective ways to emphasize the liberal arts.

Promoting the efficacy of the generic “liberal arts” to today’s career-minded high school students and their parents is difficult. But we can specifically demonstrate how a liberal arts core curriculum can benefit a student and his or her career aspirations.

Today’s businesses and professionals know that teaching people how to think, not what to think, is more important than ever, and that is the role of the liberal arts.

Addressing the Crisis in Corporate Consciousness: Business Schools Should Require Separate Course on Ethics

JACK CALARESO, PRESIDENT, OHIO DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY

The Columbus Dispatch, September 21, 2002

Last month, *Forbes* Magazine reported that one of the top executives of the world’s No. 2 maker of card swipes for checkout counters was accused of rape by a secretary. The company retained the executive and paid the woman off with hush money. The company’s CEO said, “The \$100,000 we spent was well worth the [sales] he was bringing in ... that’s a business decision, not on a moral level.”

No single story better illustrates what is wrong with American business in the current Enron era.

Unfortunately, the economist Milton Friedman said it best when he famously wrote that “the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits.”

It is the false belief that morality is somehow suspended in the corporate world; that business is business and ethics is ethics and never the twain shall meet. Ken Lay is just the latest in a long line of people to walk down this actual road to perdition.

To be sure, business executives who view their obligations in this vulgar way are the rare exception in America. But like a virus, their misguided view of morality infects the collective consciousness, and the resulting disease is a double killer.

First and foremost, the ethically challenged minority causes the direct financial havoc that we have witnessed this past year: thousands of people with lost pensions, billions of dollars in lost revenue and productivity, and the largest single drop in valuation in the history of the New York Stock Exchange.

But the more insidious damage is caused indirectly and comes in the form of lost confidence not just in “the markets” but in the very institution of American business. The unfortunate thing about the latter consequence is that it so unfairly tarnishes the vast majority of deeply committed and genuinely moral business men and women who are the lifeblood not just of our economy but our civilization.

There is no easy solution. The recent legal and regulatory changes go a long way toward at least making the morally corrupt be more creative and work harder for ill-gotten gains, and perhaps deterring some of the less resilient.

But legal solutions alone will not solve the problem. We must get at the underlying ethical causes. We must change the corporate culture so that there are fewer Ken Lays in the world, and that when they do show up, the forces of light are so strong in the corporate culture they are quickly revealed and dealt with.

There is no panacea. There are many routes toward a more generally ethical society: liberal education, moral formation, social responsibility and understanding chief among them. But there is one specific thing we can do that I believe would be a great first step out of the ethical abyss of Enron.

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, which accredits American university business programs, should change its criteria for accreditation to require that students take separate courses dedicated entirely to business ethics.

Business schools must have ethical components in their curriculum to be certified by the association, but the group does not prescribe how or how much ethics is taught, and a separate course or courses on ethics are not required. The association is currently reviewing its standards.

Changing the standards to require separate courses on ethics would make a positive difference in two ways.

First, it would send a message to the thousands of young minds entering business schools in this era of ethical uncertainty that we are serious about ethics. Milton Friedman was wrong. Ethics and business are inseparable, and that should be universally expressed in our business curricula.

Second, the change would serve as a focal point for a renewed discussion and study in academia of business ethics. Business schools across the nation have already begun reevaluating their business curricula in the wake of Enron, WorldCom, etc. A move by the national business school accrediting body to institute business ethics more formally in curricula nationally would help focus this energy and discussion.

President George W. Bush observed recently, “Ultimately the ethics of American business depend on the conscience of America’s business leaders.”

And ultimately the conscience of America’s business leaders depends on the efforts of America’s business schools.

Two centuries before Enron, a British politician defined our current crisis. King George III’s chancellor Baron Thurlow remarked at the end of the 18th Century: “How can you expect a corporation to have a conscience, when it has no soul to be damned and no body to be kicked?”

We can, and we do expect that a corporation have a conscience, soul or no soul. Now, more than ever is a time for society to assert and enforce this expectation. Higher education must be integral to the solution. It is the ethical thing to do!

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—William Frame, Augsburg College



Vocation, Not Vocationalism

WILLIAM V. FRAME, PRESIDENT, AUGSBURG COLLEGE

“A President Looks Back 500 Years and Finds His Calling”
The Chronicle of Higher Education, September 6, 2002

Having recently returned from a 10-year stint in the corporate world to my original home in the academy, I have stumbled onto an idea of great utility — both to rationalize my own tortuous career path and to guide the curricular and cultural reforms needed to serve our college’s students. The idea is vocation.

As the president of Augsburg College, one of the 43 Lutheran colleges in North America, I have met the idea on its home ground. It was Martin Luther who gave shape to its development in his teaching on education, and it has been Lutheran colleges that have saved the idea from today’s commonly used technical-job-training definition.

A vocation is a called life of service. Luther certainly did not limit vocation to the profession of clerics. (What the world needs, he believed, is a good cobbler, not only someone who hangs a cross upon his work.) Indeed, the competence that vocation demanded was reconciled in Luther’s thought much more thoroughly with citizenship and civility than with theology. It was to be practiced in the venue he called the “Kingdom on the Left,” which he hoped would be served primarily by schools and colleges — as distinguished from the “Kingdom on the Right,” which was to be served by the church.

Among other things, a focus on vocation has helped us at Augsburg to more sharply distinguish education from the arts with which it is regularly confused: training, informing, demonstrating, inspiring, convincing, indoctrinating, positioning. I have practiced several of those noneducational arts over the span of my life’s work, with varying degrees of compe-

tence, and the experience was in every case unfulfilling. Yet that very experience, now interpreted within the context of vocation, has deepened my confidence in the transforming power of education, properly understood and practiced.

The most immediately distinguishing aspect of vocation is that of being drawn to an undertaking with a deep sense that “This is the right work for me!” I first encountered that aspect as a reporter for the student newspaper at Ohio State University in the 1950s. Campus journalism in the early days of the civil rights movement was a thrilling business, and it gave me, for the first time in my college life, popular recognition. Yet my inner voice had not yet matured, and was thus overwhelmed by its natural rival, the voice of public acclaim.

That orientation, unfortunately, remained as I shifted my study to political science and followed it into the professoriate. In fact, I long thought that it was merely accidental that one day I found myself at a “highly selective” liberal arts college in the countryside of the Midwest, where I eventually achieved tenure and the rank of professor of political science. Now I see that I was actually chasing after the seductive but ultimately unsatisfactory vindication of acclaim. I was appealing to a particular cabal of intellectuals, and measured the wisdom of my work by the strength of their cheering.

Even so, the process of becoming a professor and achieving tenure introduced me to two of the critical axioms of the teaching vocation: Great teachers begin and remain as serious students — of themselves as well as of the world — and learning improves life. But since I discovered those axioms in a selective liberal arts college that was purposely set well away from the city, they took a particularly private and mildly antisocial form. They did not jell with the outgoing and service-oriented aspects of vocation.

The obligation of vocation to serve the world in ministry to others emerges from a love of the world, not a rejection of it. At the liberal-arts college, most

of us on the faculty preferred theoretical or classroom wisdom far above experiential learning. That reduced our citizenship to a confidently enlightened criticism of the public and of public servants. We diagnosed in those days; we did not propound therapies to advance civility or improve society.

A sneaking discomfort with all this caused me, I now think, to strike out from the secure shores of rural academe after 13 years there. I had gone to Chicago to direct a research program in the humanities at the Newberry Library. I fell in love with the city, which, I realized, is the quintessential social institution of the modern world. The city compels its aficionados to construct a coherent, interactive, public life. Among the professional urbanites whom I met, collaboration and deliberation with colleagues — across departmental boundaries, with superiors as well as subordinates — seemed to make work both fulfilling and ultimately civic. I began to realize the drawbacks of the enriched privacy that I and many of my colleagues had created at the excellent college in the country.

As a result, I was hesitant to return to the college at the end of the fellowship. Almost frantically, I cast about for an alternative, wondering what a 42-year-old full professor of an arcane art could do effectively in the “real” world. I joined the First National Bank of Chicago as a trainee in the summer of 1981. I took a pay cut, worked out a leave of absence with the college, and enrolled at the midpoint of an intensive introductory accounting class offered by a downtown university.

When I later resigned my rank and tenure to stick with the bank, what I wanted most was knowledge of how the commercial republic, so long the subject of my teaching and writing, actually worked. Thrust into the midst of it, I discovered the corporate world to be a far different place than I had learned it to be in the academy. To begin with, it was far more humane — more candid and encouraging. It also was, shockingly, full of better-educated people. The international division that I joined after banking boot camp had six or seven Ph.D.s, not counting those in the country-risk and economic-analysis units. More musicians and artists were on my floor than at the entire college. Perhaps most surprising, there was more hunger for serious conversation than among my faculty colleagues.

I also discovered that profitable business is accomplished only among those who have learned to trust

each other. Contrary to the academic arguments about the role of self-interest in financial transactions, I learned that the only deals that hold together and lead to new interchanges are mutually satisfactory ones. In the corporate world, a trusted colleague’s word is better than a signature on a legal document.

Moreover, except in a few areas of the bank, any cultivation of privacy that led toward individualism and a work silo meant the end of one’s career. Collaboration, relationship development and management, helpfulness — these were the hallmarks of successful careers.

The radically social character of corporate life, as I experienced it, revealed a new relationship between the private and the public. I noticed that no transaction was completed in the commercial world — even when it answered profitably to the particular interests of each party — unless it could be publicly described as meeting the interests they held in common. The kind of deliberation that could discover and then dignify the common interest depended about equally on theory and practice. Hence, the corporate world ranked experience — understood as “doing business” in the world of work — far above its meager status in the academy.

Those seven years in commercial banking, followed by three in corporate finance, gave me a profoundly different attitude toward work and the world than I had acquired in the academy. Yet as I advanced in the commercial hierarchy — eventually becoming the equivalent of a senior vice president and then moving into senior management at a Fortune 500 corporation in the upper Midwest — I became less and less interested in the ultimate purpose (stockholder value) of the institutions that employed me. I knew that my appreciation of the compatibility of work and personal fulfillment in the modern commercial world had deepened in several important ways, and I longed to see how that new understanding would resonate with students. I wanted to go back to teaching.

Yet, as I was absolutely dumbfounded to discover, higher education institutions did not invite my return, especially into any available teaching or teaching-related administrative function. I had to make my way back through finance — and I am still understood, after a reunion of 10 years, as a businessman in the academy.

I re-entered the hallowed halls as vice president and chief financial officer at Pacific Lutheran

University, one of the 30-odd colleges of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. A new president of the University intended to revitalize the place by means of strategic planning. I was commissioned to find the distinguishing marks of Pacific Lutheran in its tradition and location.

It was there that I learned of Martin Luther's respect for "the fine liberal arts," which he proposed as the chief human therapy for modernity — the world in which work had begun to disconnect from its earlier communitarian functions. Vocation, or the called life of service, is the ultimate objective of that therapy. Luther's writings on the division of life into two distinct but related kingdoms reopened a relationship for me that had been shattered by the academic orthodoxy that religion is both a private and anti-intellectual matter. I mean, of course, the relationship of reason and faith. What Luther taught me is that faith is a form of knowing, not an alternative to it, and that it is through the faith side of cognition rather than the reason side that the beckoning voice of vocation comes.

I could see in Luther's idea of vocation the makings of a life-changing educational concept. My own academic respect for reason had cut me off from the great riches of theology, and had consigned my personal religiosity to an intensely private preserve. But, in the presence of Luther and my colleagues in a church-related college that was reaching for institutional revitalization, I began to draw together into a new educational philosophy the disparate elements of what had by now been four different adult careers.

It was the corporate experience, above all others, that facilitated my fruitful contact with Luther. It forced me to deny my original academic view that the private realm is the exclusive venue of personal growth. It presented work to me in an unexpected integrative role. I began to see it as the testing ground of data-driven or bookish academic wisdom, and as the dimension of life to which one could unashamedly bring all of one's abilities. Now, as president of Augsburg, I am pursuing the application of vocation in our curriculum and culture in ways that reflect my personal and increasingly fulfilled search for my own calling. In fact, vocation is changing the ways that I and others throughout the institution assist students in their journey through college and help them envision their careers — beginning with the vocation

of being a student. We have intentionally introduced the concept of vocation into the curriculum and extracurricular activities, and are encouraging all of our employees to consider their work and career prospects in light of vocation.

For example, we have created six courses that specifically focus on the idea of a personal calling for each student. Some are general education courses, designed to reach a broad spectrum of students, while others are geared to the specific needs of students who intend to pursue careers in ministry. Among other activities, we also conduct two retreats annually for freshmen and sophomores as an opportunity to discern their calling, their responsibilities to one another, and their career choices. We have added assessment instruments to the career-counseling process that deal more directly with a theological exploration of value and vocation. And we plan to conduct a summer-vocation institute, where 20 Augsburg students who have been advised by faculty members in vocational pursuits will, in turn, advise high-school students.

We hope that our students' lives will have a profound reformist orientation, but that it won't be some theoretical social justice that calls them. Indeed, vocational lives are in, of, and for the world. But they are lived by human beings aware of their need of redemption, convinced that they could be wrong in their recommendation of any policy, and obliged by the great joy conveyed by their freedom to make of themselves a gift to their neighbor.

As for myself, looking back, I see that the concept of vocation has helped me find a pattern in what I once regarded with shame as a restless turning from one profession and career to another. It has finally brought me some clarity on the question of why I gave up my tenured professorship in midlife to become, of all things, a commercial banker. It has cast some light on the academy's refusal to accept my application to return after a decade in the corporate world, except as an administrator in finance.

Finally, it has allowed me to make real progress in drawing together into a satisfying whole both thought and action, theory and practice, work and leisure, and ultimately, reason and faith. That wholeness is the ultimate gift of the called life of service — and what I believe we should strive to achieve for ourselves and our students. ■

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